

## University of Maryland, College Park

### Field-Initiated Research

#### Type of Applicant

State controlled institution of higher learning

#### Project Title

"Understanding Spirituality in Community Programming"

#### Project Period

January 2003 to May 2004

#### Focus of Research

This research will be a multi-phase examination of the effectiveness of service delivery programs of FBO/CBOs.

#### Description of Project

This research will examine the impact of FBO/CBO social service programs that serve individuals returning to society after prison or under criminal justice supervision. The study will determine how FBO/CBOs contribute to reductions in recidivism and drug use, strengthened social and family attachments, and improved spiritual and psychological functioning.

#### Research Project

The study will explore how spirituality/religiosity contributes to overall outcomes for individuals returning from prison or under community criminal justice supervision. The focus will be on:

1. How the services contribute to greater attachment to the community.
2. How the services effect the individual progress toward pro-social behavior.

#### Goals of the Research

The goal will be to uncover best-practices and to measure how these organizations impact the clients and communities they serve -- as defined as examples identified through empirical analysis -- by which FBO/CBOs improve the mental, physical, psychological, spiritual, and social welfare of clients and communities, as well as contribute to reductions in clients criminal offending and drug use.

#### Research Questions

Individual:

1. What is the ability of each organization to strengthen social/familial attachments of clients to community?
2. How does the combination of faith and social service delivery impact individuals' motivation to change, become more productive, and develop greater self-awareness?
3. How effective are partner organizations in contributing to reductions in substance use, criminal activity, and improvements in employment outcomes 9 to 12 months after service delivery.

Structural:

1. What role does each FBO play in providing services to the homeless, unemployed, offenders, and substance abusers? Are services holistic? What are the "best practices"?
2. What is the "value-added" by combining faith with service delivery?
3. What is the relationship between FBO/CBOs in communities? Are services integrated?

#### Sub-Research Questions and Hypotheses

Individual question hypotheses: Compared to a control group, clients of FBO/CBOs will have:

1. Lower rates of recidivism, drug use, and arrest rates.
2. Improved employment outcomes, psychological functioning, and strengthened social and familial attachments.
3. Improvements in how they cope with physical and mental health problems and choice to lead a more proactive and healthier lifestyle.
4. Demonstrate higher motivation to change, increased receptivity to treatment and social services, and greater motivation to be productive members of society.

Structural question hypotheses:

1. FBO/CBOs play a vital role in the provision of holistic and individualized social services to the homeless, unemployed, offenders, and/or substance abusers.
2. Staff of FBO/CBOs will share information and communicate with other area CBOs, but will do this much less with the larger area service network, including among private, non-profit, and government agencies.

#### Methodology

The study proposes a quasi-experimental design with longitudinal data. Data will be collected before the program "intervention" and then at the end of the study (pre-test, post-test) to assess impacts. The researchers will use urine tests, program record and public record review, and several different surveys to capture individual-level data related to criminal records, drug use, employment histories, health, social services use, psychological functioning, and religious behaviors/beliefs. Researchers will also survey FBO/CBO staff about their program, do Network Analysis to examine communication between FBO/CBOs and other organizations, and survey business owners to examine community impacts of the service delivery. The sample will be of 240 offenders and exoffenders. 60 will be new intakes in FBOs, 60 will be new intakes in CBOs, and 120 will be a comparison group of offenders not in these programs. The experimental group will all be clients of 5 FBOs and 2 CBOs located in the Baltimore, MD area. The organizations involved are I-CAN, The Nehemia House, The Hiding Place, New Life, Druid Heights Community Corporation, and The Salvation Army.

#### Limitations

The three main limitations to the study include the proposed conducting of only one follow-up interview with clients, the brief follow-up period, and the small sample size. Data will be drawn from 7 FBO/CBOs and a local Probation & Parole Office (comparison group site) to collect a total sample size of 240 clients. This sample size, though small, is sufficiently large to achieve a power threshold of .80, thus, increasing the likelihood of showing a significant result when it exists. Though results from this particular study will not be able to be generalized universally, statistically significant differences found in client outcomes between FBOs and CBOs will not only yield important implications for current programming, but also will lay the foundation for future studies that can include larger sample sizes and be conducted over several years.

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#### Background

Given the strong link between drugs and criminal activity, treatment programs and "natural systems" (such as family, religious and social organizations) can often moderate this connection and help break cycles of criminality, joblessness, poverty and drug use. While spirituality seems to be a contributor in substance abuse recovery and rehabilitation for criminals, very little is known about how faith/spirituality strengthens service delivery.

#### Additional Pertinent Background Information

The project uses the HUD definition of FBO, which includes:

1. Congregations,
2. National networks (including national denominations, social service components of religious groups, and networks of related organizations such as YMCAs, and
3. Freestanding religious organizations.

#### Geographic Location

The first phase of the study will take place in and around seven partner organizations located in the Salvation Army in the Baltimore, MD area. The coordination of data collection and data analysis will take place in College Park, MD.

#### Grant Award Amount

\$193,456